

Yellowstone
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GUIDE TO THE CANYON AREA

Canyon Area Trails

There are miles of trails in the Canyon area. Many are well traveled, short, and paved; others are maintained and marked, but not paved.

The elevation of the Canyon rim is about 8000 feet, which makes even the short walks surprisingly strenuous for many people. Take your time, and wear good walking shoes or boots. At times it is wise to carry raingear. On the longer trails you may want to carry water and a lunch, or whatever food you think necessary.

As you travel, to avoid accidents, watch your footing and please stay on the trails. Climbing into the Canyon off the established trails is both dangerous and prohibited by law. Due to the steepness of the Canyon walls many trails have been constructed in switchback ("zigzag") fashion. It is dangerous to cut across switchbacks. You can easily slip and fall and you might knock rocks down on someone below you. You would also cause ugly and unnatural erosion of the walls.

Do not throw anything into the canyon. Rocks and other hard objects might injure someone below you. Litter is unsightly. Removing litter from the Canyon is a dangerous and expensive job. Please help us keep the area clean.

If you plan to hike overnight in the backcountry be sure to pick up a backcountry permit at the Ranger Station. While there you can also obtain the latest trail information and advice regarding the adequacy of your equipment for the trip. For longer trips you should purchase a USGS topographic map of the park. These are available at any Visitor Center. **Permits should be obtained before 5 p.m.**

Most trails in Yellowstone are marked with orange or yellow metal tags tacked to trees or posts. In wooded sections the tags are fairly small (about 3x5 inches); in meadows they are larger (about 8 inches square).

Please **STAY ON THE TRAILS.** Getting lost in Yellowstone is no laughing matter.

The Canyon area, like all of Yellowstone, is grizzly bear country. The backcountry traveler always runs some risk of an encounter with a bear. To reduce this risk, make noise as you hike through areas where you might accidentally startle a bear. Whistle, or attach a bell to your pack.

In season, guided horseback trips are regularly taken on some of the Canyon area trails. In addition there are many pleasant half day and full day rides that can be arranged. The saddle horse concession is located 1-1/2 miles south of Canyon Junction on the Lake-Canyon road. Should you wish to bring in your own stock you should write the Chief Ranger well in advance of your trip for particulars. If you intend to keep your animals overnight in any of the developed areas they must be boarded at the horse concession since there are no combined facilities for grazing and camping.

On the road in Yellowstone you are on the threshold to wilderness. Plan your off-the-road, wilderness trips with care. Savor the best that your National Park has to offer — its backcountry.

Please take only pictures — let no one regret that you walked here.

NORTH RIM

Short Walks

Trail from Grandview to "P" Loop Cabin Area — Park at either end of the trail. About 1/2 mile in length, this paved trail is especially pleasant in the early morning.

Trail to the Brink of the Upper Falls — Park at the Upper Falls parking area. This is a very short (1/8 mile) walk to the lip of the 109 foot Upper Falls.

Trail to the Brink of the Lower Falls — Park at the southernmost parking area on the North Rim Drive. The short (3/8 mile) walk along a paved trail drops about 600 feet into the Canyon to the brink of the 308 foot Lower Falls.

Red Rock Point Trail; Lookout Point — Park at the Lookout Point parking area. The paved trail to Red Rock drops several hundred feet in about 3/8 of a mile. Lookout Point, on the rim, offers essentially the same view of the Lower Falls as Red Rock, but does not permit the viewer to get as close to the falls.

Grandview Trail — Park at the Grandview parking area. This is a very short paved walk to a view of much of the Canyon.

Inspiration Point Trail — Park at the northernmost parking area on the North Rim Drive. Several steps direct you down this short, paved walk to an overlook providing a spectacular Canyon view.

North Rim Trail — Portions of this trail are paved. Starting at Chittenden Bridge, the first 1/2 mile to the Upper Falls parking area takes the hiker close to the river, a beautiful and impressive torrent as it approaches the Canyon. From slightly west of the Upper Falls parking area the trail continues past Crystal Falls, on Cascade Creek, to the Lower Falls parking area, another 1/2 mile, then to Lookout Point (1/2 mile), to Grandview Point (1/4 mile), and finally to Inspiration Point (1-1/8 miles). By trail, Inspiration Point is slightly more than 2 1/4 miles from the Upper Falls parking area, and 2 7/8 miles from Chittenden Bridge.

NORTH SIDE OF THE CANYON

Longer Hikes

Riding Trails

Though the full length of all trails is not shown on the map, a number of longer hikes originate within the mapped area. A brief description of these trails is given below. **Backcountry permits are required for all overnight hikes.**

Howard Eaton Trail to Cascade, Grebe, Wolf, and Ice Lakes, and Norris — From the trailhead 1/2 mile west of Canyon Junction on the Norris-Canyon road the hiker passes through forest, meadow, and marshland to Cascade Lake (3 miles), Grebe Lake (4-1/4 miles), Wolf Lake (6-1/4 miles), Ice Lake (8-1/2 miles), and Norris (12 miles). With the exception of the trail up Observation Peak from Cascade Lake, trails in this area have little vertical rise.

The climb to **Observation Peak** is strenuous, rising about 1400 feet in 3 miles. From the top the hiker is rewarded with an outstanding view of some of Yellowstone's wilderness country.

A second spur from the Howard Eaton Trail in this area takes the hiker from **Cascade Lake to Cascade Lake Picnic Area**, which is 1-1/4 miles north of Canyon Junction on the Tower-Canyon road. The hiker with limited time can take a very enjoyable walk from the picnic area to the lake, then on to the trailhead at the Norris-Canyon road, covering about 5 miles.

A third spur from the Howard Eaton Trail offers easy access to **Grebe Lake** from the Norris-Canyon road. About 3 miles west of Canyon Junction, at the Grebe Lake parking area and trailhead, a 3 mile trail goes directly into Grebe Lake. When coupled with the Howard Eaton Trail from either Cascade Lake Picnic Area, or the trailhead 1/2 mile west of the junction, half day walks of about 6-1/4 and 7-1/4 miles, respectively, are possible.

Howard Eaton Trail to Tower Fall; Seven Mile Hole — Park at the Glacial Boulder. Until its juncture with the Howard Eaton Trail, this trail follows the Canyon rim past a good view of Silver Cord Cascade, at 1-1/2 miles. At almost 2 miles this rim trail joins the Howard Eaton. Continue north at this junction.

At 3 miles the **Seven Mile Hole Trail** drops off to the right, 1250 vertical feet in about 2 miles. Hike it carefully, watch your footing, and conserve your energy. Depending on your condition and the weather, it can be a long climb back out of Seven Mile Hole.

If you continue north past the Seven Mile Hole Trail junction you will approach Washburn Hot Springs at about 5-1/4 miles, and come to another junction at 6-3/4 miles.

This is the **Mt. Washburn Spur Trail**, a secondary trail which climbs about 2000 feet in a little more than 2-1/4 miles. This, too, is a long climb even if you are in good condition. From the top it is 3-1/2 miles down the other side of the mountain to Dunraven Pass, on the Tower-Canyon road.

If you continue north from the Mt. Washburn Spur Trail junction you eventually reach Tower Junction, 20 miles from Glacial Boulder.

SOUTH RIM

Short Walks

Uncle Tom's Trail — A short walk into the Canyon at the base of the Lower Falls. Because this is a very strenuous walk, dropping about 500 feet over a series of stairways and paved inclines, it is not recommended for people with heart and lung conditions. Much of the walk is constructed of perforated steel sheeting, so you should wear comfortable, flat-heeled walking shoes which will not get caught in the mesh. Portions of the walk are often wet, which in the spring or fall, or in the early morning, may be a film of ice. For those in good condition this is a very rewarding walk.

Artist Point Trail — A very short walk from the parking area at the north end of the South Rim Drive. Many people consider this the best view of the Lower Falls and much of the Canyon.

Clear Lake Trail — From the Uncle Tom's Trail parking area this trail takes the hiker through large rolling meadows and forested areas to Clear Lake. It is about 2-1/4 miles roundtrip. Bison and elk may be seen in these meadows in the early mornings and late afternoons, especially in the fall. Large ground squirrel populations and an abundance of succulent grasses and plant roots often attract bears to these meadows in the spring, where they spend hours digging and grazing.

South Rim Trail — Park at the large lot near Chittenden Bridge. This partly paved trail parallels the Canyon for 3-1/4 miles to Sublime Point. Many striking viewpoints of both falls and the Canyon can be reached on this trail, as well as access to Uncle Tom's Trail, Artist Point, Lilypad Lake (about 3/4 of a mile from Artist Point), and Sublime Point (about 1-1/4 miles from Artist Point).

Ribbon Lake Trail — From the Chittenden Bridge parking area follow the markers along the Wapiti Lake Trail until you come to a junction, at about 3 miles. Bear left (north) at the junction; Ribbon Lake is about 3/4 of a mile farther. Connecting trails to Lilypad Lake, Clear Lake, and the South Rim Trail offer several possible variations to this trip.

SOUTH SIDE OF THE CANYON

Longer Hikes

Riding Trails

As with the longer trails on the north side of the Canyon, the full length of all trails is not shown on the map, but all of the trips described below originate on the mapped area. **Backcountry permits are required for all overnight hikes.**

Wapiti Lake Trail — Park at Chittenden Bridge parking area. This full day's hike up and over the southern end of the heavily forested Mirror Plateau to Wapiti Lake is a reward in itself for the strong hiker. The lake is about 18 miles from Chittenden Bridge.

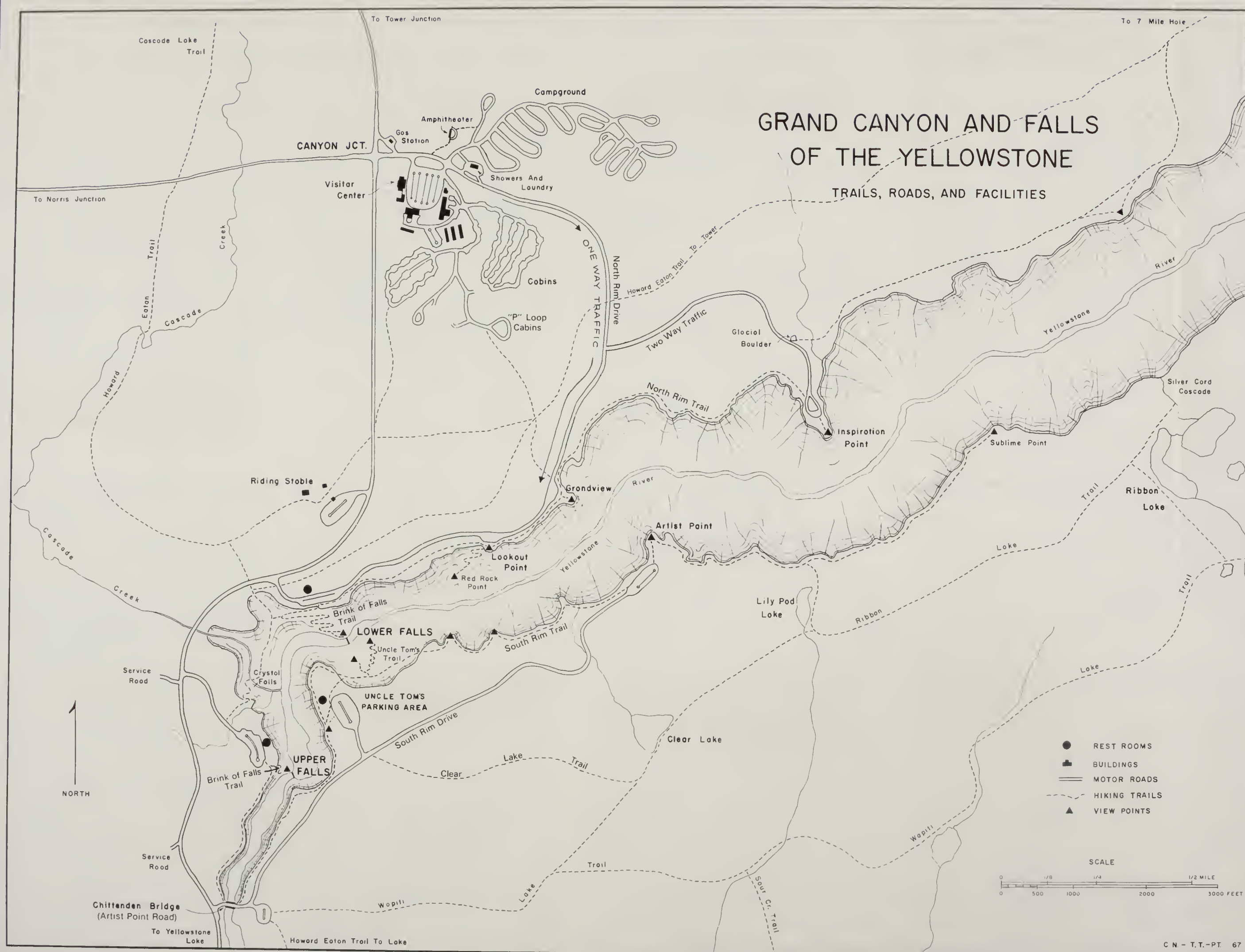
Sour Creek Trail — Park at Chittenden Bridge parking lot. This very popular riding trail is also a beautiful walk. Allow a little more than a half a day for the roundtrip walk to Wrangler Lake. Follow the Wapiti Lake trail for about 1-1/2 miles. Follow the signs at the junction, bearing right (south) to the lake, an additional 3-1/4 miles. Most of the way is through large rolling meadows at the northern end of Hayden Valley. Elk often graze at Wrangler Lake early and late in the day.

Howard Eaton Trail to Lake — Allow a full day for the hike from Chittenden Bridge through Hayden Valley on the east side of the Yellowstone River. Grizzly bear, bison, elk, and moose — or their sign — are commonly seen on this walk. **All large animals are potentially dangerous and should not be approached.** A lone bull bison is alone for several reasons, one of which may be that he just does not want any company. Also, for your own safety and for their well-being you should never disturb wildlife with young.

The river teems with life. It is closed to fishing in Hayden Valley so that nesting waterfowl can raise their young in peace. Look for ducks, geese, trumpeter swans, pelicans, muskrat, mink, otter, and coyotes.

GRAND CANYON AND FALLS OF THE YELLOWSTONE

TRAILS, ROADS, AND FACILITIES



CANYON GEOLOGY

The yellow-hued rocks lining the canyon walls are soft, hydrothermally altered rhyolite lavas. The rocks at the brinks of the falls consist of less altered, more resistant rhyolites. A brief look at the geologic history will help to explain this story:

About 600,000 years ago, huge volcanic eruptions occurred, emptying a large underground magma chamber. Volcanic debris spread for thousands of square miles in a matter of minutes. The roof of this chamber collapsed forming a giant smoldering pit - a caldera 30 miles across, 45 miles wide, and several thousand feet deep. Eventually the caldera was filled with lava.

One of these flows was the Canyon Rhyolite flow, approximately 590,000 years ago, which came from the east and ended just west of the present canyon. A thermal basin developed in this lava flow altering and weakening the rhyolite lava by action of the hot steam and gases. Look for steam in the canyon, evidence of the old thermal area.

Other lava flows created large lakes that overflowed cutting through the various hard and soft rhyolites creating the canyon. Later, the canyon was blocked three different times by glaciers. Each time these glaciers formed lakes which filled with sand and gravel. Floods from the melting glaciers at the end of each glacial period recarved the canyon, deepened it, and removed most of the sand and gravel. The large rocks in the river upstream from Chittenden Bridge and the Upper Falls were left behind in the last glacial flood.

The 308 foot Lower Falls were formed by the leading edge of the Canyon Rhyolite lava flow and the western edge of the old thermal basin. The hard, resistant lava at the brink did not erode, while the altered and weakened lava in the thermal basin eroded easily. The 109 foot Upper Falls was also formed at a contact point of hard and soft rhyolite lavas. In this case, the brink and the massive cliffs are of a dense, resistant rhyolite, while immediately downstream the rhyolite lava contains much volcanic glass which erodes more easily.

The present appearance of the canyon dates from about 10,000 years ago, when the last glaciers melted. Very little change has occurred since that time. The canyon today is approximately 800-1200 feet deep and 1500-4000 feet wide, 20 miles long.



This leaflet has been produced to increase your enjoyment of Yellowstone National Park by the Yellowstone Library and Museum Association in cooperation with the National Park Service. U. S. Department of the Interior